

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Chester Grundy

---

## Overview of the Collection

<b>Repository:</b>	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
<b>Creator:</b>	Grundy, Chester, 1947-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Chester Grundy,
<b>Dates:</b>	December 9, 2002
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2002
<b>Physical Description:</b>	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:20:09).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Academic administrator Chester Grundy (1947 - ) is the head of Black Studies at the University of Kentucky and is founder of the National Black Holistic Society. Grundy was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on December 9, 2002, in Lexington, Kentucky. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2002_228
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

---

## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

For thirty years, educator Chester Grundy has been the human bridge between cultures at the University of Kentucky. Born on August 22, 1947, in Louisville, Kentucky, Grundy grew up in the California neighborhood of Louisville. Strongly influenced by a Catholic monk, Grundy professed his intention to join a monastery when he was just fourteen, but had second thoughts when a monk cautioned him that he would have to leave behind Pepsi Cola. Instead, Grundy went to the University of Kentucky. An active member of the civil rights movement, Grundy helped with the establishment of the Black Student Union before graduating in 1969.

Fed up with the racially hostile environment at UK, Grundy planned to bolt to a job at Notre Dame after graduation. Following his father's death, Grundy felt obligated to support his family, and accepted instead a job offer at his alma mater. As the director of the Office of African American Student Affairs and the Martin Luther King, Jr. Cultural Center at the university, Grundy has injected black culture into a campus previously lacking in it. Grundy established the Spotlight Jazz Series, bringing jazz legends to the school, and also arranged for renowned black personalities to speak on campus.

Beyond the university, Grundy co-founded the Roots & Heritage Festival and the Martin Luther King, Jr. celebration in Lexington, Kentucky. As an interim vice president of student affairs at Kentucky State University in Frankfort, Grundy works to span the divide between the predominantly black institution and UK.

Chester Grundy is married and has two adult daughters.

---

## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Chester Grundy was conducted by Larry Crowe on December 9, 2002, in Lexington, Kentucky, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Academic administrator Chester Grundy

(1947 - ) is the head of Black Studies at the University of Kentucky and is founder of the National Black Holistic Society.

---

# Restrictions

## Restrictions on Access

Restrictions may be applied on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of The HistoryMakers®.

## Restrictions on Use

All use of materials and use credits must be pre-approved by The HistoryMakers®. Appropriate credit must be given. Copyright is held by The HistoryMakers®.

---

# Related Material

Information about the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview, as well as correspondence with the interview subject is stored electronically both on The HistoryMakers® server and in two databases maintained by The HistoryMakers®, though this information is not included in this finding aid.

---

# Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

## Persons:

Grundy, Chester, 1947-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

## Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Grundy, Chester, 1947---Interviews

---

# Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

---

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

---

University of Kentucky

---

# Occupations:

Academic Administrator

---

# HistoryMakers® Category:

EducationMakers

---

# Administrative Information

## Custodial History

Interview footage was recorded by The HistoryMakers®. All rights to the interview have been transferred to The HistoryMakers® by the interview subject through a signed interview release form. Signed interview release forms have been deposited with Jenner & Block, LLP, Chicago.

## Preferred Citation

The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Chester Grundy, December 9, 2002. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

## Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 5/30/2023 by The HistoryMakers® staff. The finding aid was created adhering to the following standards: DACS, AACR2, and the Oral History Cataloging Manual (Matters 1995).

---

# Other Finding Aid

A Microsoft Access contact database and a FileMaker Pro tracking database, both maintained by The HistoryMakers®, keep track of the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview.

---

# Detailed Description of the Collection

## Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with Chester Grundy, Section A2002\_228\_001\_001, TRT: 0:28:40 ?  
Chester Grundy was born on August 22, 1947 in Louisville, Kentucky to Sojourner Marchbanks Grundy and Chester Grundy, Sr. His mother was born on August 9, 1912 and grew up in Tennessee where her father was a farmer; her mother was the offspring of miscegenation. Grundy's mother attended Madam C.J. Walker's School of Beauty Culture. Grundy's father was raised Catholic in Louisville, served in World War II, and then worked as a laborer. Some of Grundy's extended paternal family were rum-runners during prohibition and his family may have roots in Madagascar. Grundy grew up in the close-knit California community of Louisville and attended Phillis Wheatley Elementary

School. His teachers were highly educated with advanced degrees. After elementary school, Grundy's family moved to the West End of Louisville, a community of upwardly mobile black people. Grundy compares the two communities and describes the sights, sounds, and smells of his childhood. As a boy, many neighbors gathered in his uncle's home to watch African Americans like Nat King Cole, Gloria Lockerman, and Sugar Ray Robinson on television.

Video Oral History Interview with Chester Grundy, Section A2002\_228\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:15 ?

Chester Grundy attended Phillis Wheatley Elementary School in Louisville, Kentucky where he was taught by excellent teachers who prepared their students for integration. He talks about Muhammad Ali, who also grew up on the West End of Louisville and had a reputation as someone who was "crazy" about being a professional boxer. Grundy describes the integration of Louisville high schools in the early 1960s. He attended Louisville Male High School from 1962 to 1965; the integration of Male High School was aided by the school's athletic program which recruited black athletes. Though many discouraged Grundy from going to the University of Kentucky (UK) because it was a hostile environment for African Americans, Grundy wanted to attend UK because of its ROTC program. At UK, African American students, who formed less than 1 percent of the student population, met for social activities in Orgena, an organization whose name was formed from the reverse spelling of "a negro". Politically-minded students in Orgena, like Grundy, formed UK's Black Student Union in 1968.

Video Oral History Interview with Chester Grundy, Section A2002\_228\_001\_003, TRT: 0:29:51 ?

Chester Grundy was a leader of the Black Student Union (BSU) at the University of Kentucky (UK) in Lexington, Kentucky. The BSU's formation was catalyzed by Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination in 1968. The playing of "Dixie" at athletic events, fraternity reenactments of the Ole South, and Adolph Rupp's refusal to integrate UK's basketball team despite pressure from university president John W. Oswald, created a hostile environment for black students. However, the BSU worked to make UK more welcoming by partnering with progressive faculty members to prepare African American students for study at UK. In his junior year, Grundy was discharged from the ROTC due to a heart murmur, allowing him to become more active in the BSU. Upon graduating in 1969, he became a field representative for Kentucky's Human Rights Commission where he organized community issues and where he met his wife, Ann Grundy. In 1970, Morris Jeff recruited the Grundys to Plymouth Settlement House where Grundy ran the Communiversities program.

Video Oral History Interview with Chester Grundy, Section A2002\_228\_001\_004, TRT: 0:30:01 ?

Chester Grundy joined the Plymouth Settlement House, with his wife, Ann Grundy in 1970 at the behest of Morris Jeff. There, he and the staff collaborated to create community programs for children, adults, and seniors. In addition to addressing basic needs like hunger, the agency also infused African culture into its programs by featuring guests like HistoryMaker Haki Madhubuti and exposing multi-generational audiences to black theater, music, culture. Madhubuti later encouraged Grundy to join the National Black Holistic Society. In 1972, Grundy left the Plymouth Settlement House for the University of Kentucky's Office of Minority Student Affairs where he developed year-round cultural educational programming. Grundy drew students to programs by featuring entertainers like rapper KRS-One on the same program as speakers like Kwame Touré. During his student days at the University of Kentucky, Grundy met inspirational figures like Fannie Lou Hamer and members of SNCC like HistoryMaker Julian Bond.

Video Oral History Interview with Chester Grundy, Section A2002\_228\_001\_005, TRT: 0:22:22 ?

Chester Grundy talks about the National Black Holistic Society's retreats at King Lodge Resort in upstate New York. The resort was owned by a black family, the Owens, for three generations. For its first national Kwanzaa Celebration, the National Black Holistic Society held a retreat on Georgia's Jekyll Island because it was the final point of embarkation for slave ships. The island's location drew many Southerners to the retreat. During the celebration, participants performed a ritual of spiritual reclamation in honor of people enslaved on the Georgia Sea Island Chain. The celebration featured speakers like Kwanzaa founder and HistoryMaker Maulana Karenga, HistoryMakers Na'im Akbar and Asa Hilliard, and also Louisa Tish. Grundy reflects upon his hopes and concerns for the African American community, his legacy, and how he would like to be remembered. Although his mother, Sojourner Grundy, never fully understood Grundy's cultural contributions, she was supportive nonetheless. Grundy narrates his photographs.